

# Truman Capote, Writer of Style and Clarity, Dies

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Truman Capote in a recent photograph.

## Truman Capote Is Dead at 59; Novelist of Style and Clarity

By ALBIN KREBS

Truman Capote, one of the postwar American novelists, died yesterday in Los Angeles, surrounded by family and friends. He was 59 years old.

Mr. Capote died at the home of his friend, the actress Faye Dunaway, in the Bel-Air section of the Los Angeles Police Department. "There is no indication of foul play," he said, adding that the county coroner's office would investigate the cause of death.

The novelist, short story writer and screenwriter, had been suffering from a long illness. He had been in the hospital for several weeks.

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view," asked himself whether, at that point in his life, God had helped him. His answer: "Yes. More and more. But I'm a drug addict. I'm an alcoholic. I'm a genius. Of course, I could be all four of these dubious things and still be a saint."

Named Truman Streckfus Persons after his birth in New Orleans on Sept. 30, 1924, he was the son of Archibald Persons, a member of an old Alabama family, and of the former Lillie Mae Faulk of Monroeville, Ala. Years later he adopted the surname of his stepfather, Joe Capote.

Mr. Capote's mother, who eventually committed suicide, liked to be called "Mother." He was named after her, and testified as well as her son's, ten, permanently suited to motherhood.

Living with her husband in a New Orleans house, he was in Monroeville when he was barely able to walk, and for the first nine years of his life he lived in the house of his mother and her servant, a female cousin and aunt.

In that period, he said years later, he felt like "a spiritual orphan, like a turtle on its back."

For the rest of his life, he said, "it was so different for everyone so much more intelligent and sensitive and perceptive. I was having fifty perceptions a minute to everyone else's five."

Most summers the boy returned to New Orleans for a month or so, and accompanied his father on trips up and down the Mississippi River.

Many of his stories, notably "A Christmas Memory," which paid joyful tribute to his father, were based on his childhood.

The young Truman's best friend in Monroeville was a boy named N. H. Harper, who many years later put him into her Pulitzer Prize-winning novel, "To Kill a Mockingbird."

Mr. Capote told apparently true and mostly scandalous stories about his family and friends, and he was proud of the fact that he could tell them so well.

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Rest in Peace, Truman Capote.  
I shall never forget the first time I saw "A Christmas Memory"—perfectly crystalline and fragile & overwhelming and beautiful. I believe it was also a television production — Truman Capote's "Trilogy."

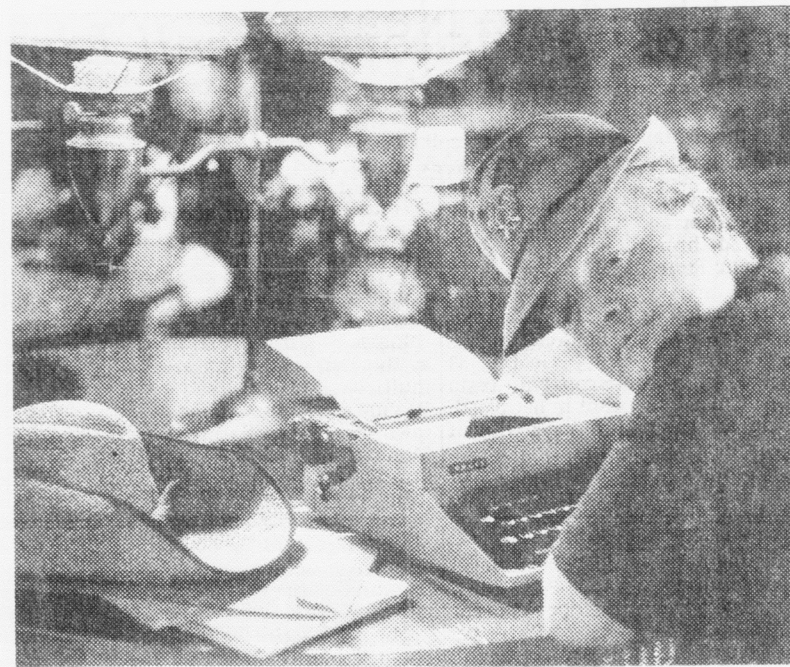
I believe should be a tape or a record of Capote reading 'a Christmas Memory.' list from the Daily News.

Works he wrote in a long career

- A partial list of books by Truman Capote:
  - "Other Voices, Other Rooms"—1948
  - "Breakfast at Tiffany's"—1958
  - "Local Color"—1959
  - "The Grass Harp"—1953
  - "The Muses Are Heard"—1956
  - "Selected Writings"—1963
  - "Cold Blood"—1965
  - "A Christmas Memory"—1966
  - "House of Flowers"—1969
  - "Thanksgiving Visitor"—1971
  - "Trilogy: An Experiment of Multimedia"—1971
  - "The Dogs Bark: Private Places and Public People"—1973
  - "Miram"—1982
  - "Chameleons"—1980
  - "One Christmas"—1983

I do want to have a Christmas tree here at Eskdale this year, a very large one in the center of the hall.

York, but he disliked schools and did poorly in his courses, including English, although he had taught himself to read and write when he was 5 years old.



Truman Capote at work on his novel "Answered Prayers" in 1971 and, left, in a photo made in the 1950's. In 1955, he was photographed while dancing with Marilyn Monroe at a New York night club. In 1976, he appeared in a cameo role in the movie, "Murder by Death."

### First Stories and Novel

In a two-year stay at The New Yorker, Mr. Capote had several short stories published in minor magazines. "Several of them were submitted to my employers, and none accepted," he wrote later. In the same period, he wrote his first, never-published novel, "Summer Crossing."



The novel, a sensitively written account of a teen-age boy's coming to grips with maturity and accepting his world as it is, achieved wide popularity and critical acclaim and was hailed as a remarkable achievement for a writer only 23 years old.

The result of Mr. Capote's discovery was "In Cold Blood," which was almost universally praised. John Hersey called it "a remarkable book," for example, but there were dissenters. Stanley Kauffmann, in The New Republic, sniped at "In Cold Blood," saying "this isn't writing, it's research."

Mr. Capote was co-author of the movie "Beat the Devil" with John Huston and wrote the screenplay for a film of Henry James's "The Innocents."

Critics noted his deft handling of children as characters in his work, his ability to move from the real to the surreal, and his use of lush words and images. In 1983, the critic Mark Schorer wrote of Mr. Capote: "Perhaps the single constant in his prose is style, and the emphasis he himself places upon the importance of style."